

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

66. The Distraction of Regret Says, "You Did That?"

You're listening to episode 66 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast, titled, "The Distraction of Regret Says, You Did That?" We're back at it today here on the podcast and I thank you for joining me. I love it when we can journey together, even if it's simply through a weekly podcast episode. It matters to me that you're here, so thank you. We've paused recently to ponder some distractions in our lives here on the podcast, and today we're discussing one that I think we can each relate to. The Distraction of Regret. Because who doesn't have at least one regret in this life? Who hasn't messed up? Who hasn't made a mistake we wish we could do differently given the chance? This distraction of regret likes to control our thoughts, our actions, and our futures. But as we will learn in today's episode, regret isn't God's best for us, and we don't have to allow it space in our lives. Hang with me here for the next short while and together we will find help and hope, and a whole lot of encouragement when it comes to regrets. So, let's get to it.

Marlon Brando once said, *"I think to regret is useless in life. It belongs to the past."*

Isn't that the truth?

I'm going out on a limb here to guess we've all felt the weight of regret. You and I have both experienced regret regarding something. Something done or not done. Some disappointment, or loss, or result from a personal action, word, or behavior. I'm guessing regret is not unfamiliar to you. It's certainly not unfamiliar to me.

Dictionary.com defines regret as: *to feel sorrow or remorse for (an act, fault, disappointment, etc.) or to think of with a sense of loss*

What's something from your past that you regret? Are you carrying any regrets around with you today?

You know? Sometimes our regrets can be so intense, they become major distractions in life. I believe it's one of the tools the enemy of our souls uses to keep us from flourishing and becoming all God desires us to be. He uses it to try to consume our thoughts, to control what we do, and to keep us stagnant. Because when we're distracted, we are less effective to live out the lives God has called us to. When we're distracted, we can't live in the moment. And when we're distracted, we miss what God has for us in the here and now.

The distraction of regret tells us awful things.

Such as:

- "If they only knew what you did!"
- "What you did shows just how flawed you are!"
- "God could never use or love anyone like you."

- "You're a failure, a mistake, a disappointment."
- "You will regret this for the rest of your life."
- "What you did is unforgiveable, unfathomable, unfavorable."

We've all heard similar words, haven't we? Sure, the circumstances may be different, but the words are similar. The distraction of regret takes great joy in defeating and defaming us. But the thing is, we have a choice in which voice we listen to. Are we listening to voice of the distraction of regret, or are we listening to God? Just because one is louder, doesn't mean that's the one we're to tune in to.

Because the distraction of regret says, "You did that?" But God says, "It doesn't matter what you've done or haven't done. I love you, anyway."

I know how it feels to live with the distraction of regret.

Because for years, I let it run my life. I allowed it to nearly ruin me. Seriously. I'm not overexaggerating here. I gave it authority in my life to tell me who I was, to control what I did, and to keep me stuck and stagnant. To the point I didn't know who I was anymore.

But as God swooped down, picked me up and sat me in my new therapist's office one Tuesday morning nearly four years ago, I came face to face with this distraction of regret. It had distracted me so far off course, that morning I began to see regret's ugliness, to hear its lies, to witness just how far it had changed me from the person I once was. I wasn't only living in this distraction; I was buried and suffocating underneath it.

Because I grew up thinking I needed to be "perfect." Whatever that means. I grew up thinking how I behaved dictated how much I was loved. Now, my parents never instilled that in me. They loved me unconditionally. But somehow this twisted thinking regarding perfection imbedded itself deep within me.

After months and months of hard work in therapy, one day I recognized the woman in the mirror. She was the woman I once knew, minus the regrets. Gone were the lies. Gone were the shameful thoughts. And gone was the weight that accompanied the regret. I felt freedom, and wholeness, and completeness, for the first time in a long time.

And I couldn't thank and praise God enough.

Instead of living in regret for the things I did or did not do, I now see how because of those things, I am who I am today. God uses all we go through in our lives for our growth, for His good in our lives, and for His glory. Even my mistakes, my mess ups, my sins, and my failures, God has used and continues to use them all. Sure, I still have consequences for my sin, but when I confess them to Him, He is quick to forgive me.

If He forgives me, I can forgive me too.

And when we do that, regret has no place to take root. Regret has nothing to cling to.

It's then when we can learn from our regrets and move on.

Maybe that's where Lucy Maud Montgomery was coming from when she once said, *"We should regret our mistakes and learn from them, but never carry them forward into the future with us."*

I think sometimes regret can be a good thing when it causes us to turn to God, to ask for His forgiveness, and to be cleansed from what we've done or haven't done. God takes that regret and repurposes them into lessons. Lessons of what to do or not to do in the future. Again, He uses all we go through for our growth, for His good in our lives, and for His glory.

But living with the distraction of regret is not God's best for us.

When we give it to Him, however, He uses it for good.

My past mistakes have helped me be who I am today. I wouldn't be the same woman without them. Even though they weren't fun to walk through, God brought good from them. I can't say anymore that I wish they never would have happened, because I'm not sure I would be in this very spot today without them. So much of my life has been blessed thanks to God's miraculous working in my life through my mistakes.

I'll just say I never want to make them again, though. I've learned from them, have grown through them, and I'm able to help others not make the same mistakes.

All without regret.

So, what do we do if we're struggling with the distraction of regret?

1 - We take it to God.

We confess any wrongdoing and ask God for forgive us. We ask Him to help us forgive ourselves, and to release the regret into His hands.

1 John 1:9 CEV says, "But if we confess our sins to God, he can always be trusted to forgive us and take our sins away."

2 - Embrace God's freedom, living without regret.

Jesus has freed us from sin and death. Regret has no hold on us any longer.

Galatians 5:1 MSG says, "Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand! Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you."

3 - We remember we aren't perfect. Only Jesus is.

We all mess up. We all sin. And we all make mistakes.

Romans 3:23 NLT reminds us, "For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard."

4 - We allow God to use us.

Since we know how it feels to be distracted by regret, we can help others be freed from this distraction as well!

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 VOICE says, "All praise goes to God, Father of our Lord Jesus, the Anointed One. He is the Father of compassion, the God of all comfort. He consoles us as we endure the pain and hardship of life so that we may draw from His comfort and share it with others in their own struggles."

God can use all we go through for good!

Even the distraction of regret.

We are continuing this conversation over in our Encouragement for Real Life Community on Facebook. This week we're discussing this distraction of regret and how it keeps us away from what's important in life. We are also encouraging us in our own regrets. I'd love for you to stop over to be encouraged. The link to this group is in the show notes.

Also, if you were encouraged in this episode, would you consider rating it and/or reviewing it so others can find this encouragement too? Be sure to subscribe so you never miss an episode.

Check out the many Free Resources on my site such as bookmarks, printables, lock screens, and social posts for your personal use to encourage your heart and to add a lift to your step. The link to these resources are also in the show notes.

In closing, the distraction of regret is a big one for many of us. If the weight of past regrets is suffocating you today, I invite you to apply those four steps we just discussed to let go of the regret. But, if that doesn't seem to help, I encourage you to find a Christian therapist who may be able to assist you. If you need some help in that, message me privately.

But the distraction of regret belongs in our past. Not in our day today. God has better things in store for us. I pray you experience His freedom and His amazing grace as you release any regrets you've been carrying. Thank you for being here today. It's a joy to journey with you. God bless you!

Julie Lefebvre